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HOTEL VISITORS' PERCEPTIONS OF VALUE AND MEMBERSHIP MARKETING PROGRAM*

Visitors' perceived value have been justified as a dynamic determinant in the selection of tourism consumption experience. Understanding perceived value as an attendant factor in affecting purchase behaviors is significant to make substantial progress in improving the hotel performance quality. The objective of the study is to identify two distinct hotel visitors segments that take different sets of elements into account when evaluating their value of hotel experience. The study used a questionnaire survey. A novel research approach of the combined factor analysis (EFA & CFA) was applied in order to understand hotel visitors' perceptions of the perceived value relative to hotel experience. The results show that hotel visitors' perceived value can be examined using 24 items under 5 factors: (1) value for service experience, (2) functional value, (3) cultural value, (4) value for community, and (5) value for money. The results are used to develop prospective marketing strategies for the hotel tourism sector.

Keywords: customer value; membership marketing; hotel industry; tourism.

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СПРИЙНЯТТЯ ТУРИСТАМИ ЦІННОСТІ ТА ПРОГРАМИ ГОТЕЛЬНОЇ ЛОЯЛЬНОСТІ

У статті показано, що сприйняття туристами цінності – це динамічна змінна у процесі вибору готелю. Розуміння процесу сприйняття цінності може допомогти значно підвищити якість обслуговування в готелі. У проведеному опитуванні виділено дві групи туристів – з клубними картами окремого готелю та без привілеїв. В обох групах було проведено аналогічне опитування, результати якого було піддано факторному аналізу. Результати аналізу дозволили виявити 24 фактори впливу на сприйняття цінності за 5 основними групами: цінність досвіду обслуговування, функціональна цінність, культурна цінність, цінність для суспільства та цінності у межах заданої вартості. Результати дослідження можуть бути враховані при розробці маркетингових стратегій для готелів.

Ключові слова: цінність для клієнта; програма лояльності; готельний бізнес; туризм.

Табл. 4. Літ. 35.

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ВОСПРИЯТИЕ ТУРИСТАМИ ЦЕННОСТИ И ПРОГРАММЫ ГОСТИНИЧНОЙ ЛОЯЛЬНОСТИ

В статье показано, что восприятие туристами ценности – динамичная переменная в процессе выбора отеля. Понимание процесса восприятия ценности может помочь значительно повысить качество обслуживания в отеле. В проведённом опросе выделены две группы туристов – с клубными картами отдельного отеля и без привилегий. В обеих группах был проведён аналогичный опрос, результаты которого были подвергнуты факторному анализу. Результаты анализа позволили выявить 24 фактора влияния на восприятие ценности в 5 основных группах: ценность опыта обслуживания, функциональная ценность, культурная ценность, ценность для общества и ценности в пределах заданной цены. Результаты исследования могут быть учтены при разработке маркетинговых стратегий для отелей.

Ключевые слова: ценность для клиента; программа лояльности; гостиничный бизнес; туризм.

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1. Introduction

With growing academic interest to the hotel tourism industry, an increasing number of studies has been gradually addressing tourist selection in the hospitality and tourism literature. It appears that customer perceived value can be a vital determinant in affecting the selection of tourism consumption experience for tourists (Murray, Howat, 2002; Petrick, 2002). Examining customer perceived value can help tourism and hospitality organizations improve their understanding of why people make consumption decisions by evaluating perceived benefits from services or products. It has also been noted that being able to estimate customers' value perception and to apply that knowledge are perilous starting points to developing long-term customer retention, which results in a long-term competitiveness for tourism industry. Sanchez, Callarisa, Rodriguez and Moliner (2006) attempts to explain the relationship between perceived value as an antecedent variable and customers' purchase experience. Their study has suggested that customer perceived value would include numerous major dimensions such as functional perceived value of a travel agency, functional perceived value of a contact personnel of an agency, functional perceived value of a tourism product, functional perceived value price, emotional perceived value and social perceived value. It is evident that understanding customer perceived value referring to hotel service performance as attendant factors in affecting visitors' purchase behaviors is significant within the tourism context.

Several researchers have found membership marketing has long been recognized as a key in improving customers' repeat purchases behaviours in various settings (Liebermann, 1999; Dick, Lord, 1998; Dick, 1995). Within a competitive hotel tourism destination, loyalty membership program is a successful marketing tool to determine long-term success of a service industry through improving desires of customers. Within the tourism literature, researchers have focused increasingly on the importance of understanding customer satisfaction and purchase behavior affected by loyalty membership programs that play a key role to impact customer expectations regarding purchase experience (Liebermann, 1999; Dick, Lord, 1998).

The Asia-Pacific region has been recognized as one of the most attractive destinations for marketers, because of the significant growth rates achieved since 1974 (World Tourism Organisation, 1998). According to the recent survey conducted by Asia Pacific Travel Association (2007), approximately 356 mln international trips were made to explore destinations within the Asia-Pacific region in 2006, the 5.3% growth since 2005. Evidence on the growth of international travel by the Moodie report (2008) shows that traveler arrivals in 2007 were 3% higher in the Asia-Pacific region as compared to 2006. Studies have also revealed that a great opportunity exists within the Asia-Pacific region for better and more effective marketing strategies to attract and retain the attention of the increasing number of international travelers (Asia Pacific Travel Association, 2007). The research findings could provide insights on successful marketing and managerial implications by examining dimensions of customer perceived value in the hotel industry. The purposes of this paper are: (1) to examine the major factors of customer perceived value in hotel tourism; (2) to investigate customer perceived value as different determinants across two visitors groups (members and nonmembers of loyalty programs).

2. Related literature

Hotel industry in Taiwan

Since the Tourism Bureau of the Ministry of Transportation and Communications of Taiwan announced the implementation of the five-day working week, which has formed a new trend in the tourism industry, the number of domestic weekend travelers increased from 56.2% in 1999 to 60.9% in 2003. Over the past decades, Taiwan government has attempted to stimulate local tourism by investing approximately 1.018 bln USD aimed at growing local tourism. Recent figures suggest that the growth of the hotel industry in Taiwan over the past decade has been significant. Research studies have established that travelers be likely to spend a significant amount of budget on tourism related products during their trips (Heung and Cheng, 2000). Another recent report by the Taiwan Tourism Bureau has shown that there are 108,129 rooms in 2678 hotels in Taiwan in 2010. By 2010, the total number of 102 international and standard tourist hotels was established including large international tourist hotels, business properties, and boutique hotels which provide a significant economic contribution to the economic development of Taiwan by creating a great number of jobs, taxes, and investments.

Visitors' perceived value

The perceived value has been examined by various authors as a factor which has great influence on customers' decisions-making. Several marketing studies have demonstrated perceived value plays a significant role in determining customer satisfaction, decision-making and purchase behaviors (Kuo, Wu, Deng, 2009; Reid, Pullins, Plank, 2002). As Woodruff (1997) noted that value is a customer's established preference associated with product attributes, attribute performances. Most research seeks to explain customer value as a kind of promoting development of product attributes (Kuo, Wu, Deng, 2009; Eggert, Ulaga, 2002). In addition, the reviewed marketing studies indicates that perceived value is considered as a significant element in affecting consumers' consumption and decision making behavior (Kuo, Wu, Deng, 2009; Eggert, Ulaga, 2002; Reid, Pullins, Plank, 2002; Cronin, Brady, Hult, 2000). Reviewed literature suggests that customer value directly and significantly influences satisfaction associated with tourism experience (Pullins, Plank, 2002; Cronin, Brady, Hult, 2000). Among these notions, customer perceived value can be described as the evaluation of comparing the perception of typical perceived value and real outcome of purchase experience. Previous studies have emphasized that generating a customer value has been increasingly considered as supportive antecedent to increase a competitive advantage (Macdonald, Wilson, Martinez, Amir, 2011; Wu, Liang, 2009; Sweeney, Soutar, Johnson, 1999; Woodruff, 1997). A desirable travel experience of actual visitation are actually affected by the great perception of perceived value of visitors (Tian-Cole, Crompton, Willson, 2002; Cronin, Brady, Hult, 2000; Ekinici, Riley, Chen, 2000). Several studies examined consumer value with tourism service experience and explored whether various components of customer value delivering superior value to customers (Tian-Cole, Crompton, Willson, 2002; Cronin, Brady, Hult, 2000). A better understanding of how to create and deliver value to consumers could help managers develop more effective strategies and sustain long-term industrial relationships. It appears that tourism marketers in hotel industry are trying to appeal to all possible customers, and it seems to be believed that by enhancing the

perceived value of hotel visitors will be considered useful for their sales volumes. This study has also made a substantial contribution to the understanding of the difference in customer perceived value between two groups of hotel visitors (members and non-members).

3. Methods

Research instrument and data collection

The proposed conceptual model was developed on the basis of the findings of the visitors' perceived value regarding the hotel industry in previous research. The proposed model in this study should be regarded as a basis for further insights on the perceived value in order to improve the efficiency of management in the hotel industry. A multi-item scale was used to obtain an overall estimation of the perceived value of visitor in the hotel industry. 24 questions were designed to determine the importance of each value attribute in relation to target hotel visitors to Taiwan. A five-point labeled Likert-type scale was used. The respondents were required to give a rating between 1 = not important and 5 = very important for each of the visitor value variables included in the questionnaire. Based on the above review of tourism literature, the measuring items of the perceived value for selecting the hotel during the trip were selected from previous relevant tourism studies (Macdonald, Wilson, Martinez, Amir, 2011; Wu, Liang, 2009; Nasution, Mavondo, 2008; Sweeney, Soutar, Johnson, 1999).

Comrey (1973) recommended an adequate sample size derived from the entirety of usable questionnaires. He graded the sample size of 100 as being poor, 200 as fair, 300 as good quality, 500 as great and 1,000 as outstanding for conducting studies. In sum, it can be concluded that the sample size of 400 cases should be appropriate for most studies. Hence, the minimum sample size of this present research was $N = 369$ for conducting statistical analyses. A pre-test was conducted, using a convenience sampling technique on visitors ($n = 50$) with the purpose of checking for misunderstandings or other problems associated with the questionnaire. The final questionnaire was administered to the respondents participating in travel activities at the YOHO beach resort in Taiwan in September 2011. It was considered as validated for the main survey through a pilot survey. The qualifying question for the study involved the respondent having stayed in a hotel within the past 2 months. In this study both exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) were applied to understand which aspects may constitute the visitor's value dimension. Then, a t-test was also employed to explore the distinguished difference in the perceived value among hotel visitors.

4. Results

General profile of the respondents

The demographic profiles of the hotel visitors are as follows. The sample included 238 (64.5%) males and 131 (35.5%) females. More than half of the respondents described themselves (177 and 48%) as single; married (170 and 46%) and other (22 and 5.9%). Of the total participants 79 (21%) were aged between 18 and 25 years; between 26 and 35 – 119 or 32%; between 36 and 45 – 83 or 22%; and other – 92 (25%). The most prominent educational level was a bachelor degree (132 and 35%); followed by a high school degree (84 or 22.8%); and others (154 or 42%). Many of the respondents considered indicated the annual income of 650 to 1,000 USD (36%); followed by 1,001 to 1,350 USD (17.8%); and other (52%).

The study has summarized the self-reported visitor's travel behavior. Viewing visitors' travel behaviors in a hotel, 35 (9.5%) of the visitors were recognized as members to some hotel. Of all the respondents, 80.5% were nonmembers. The majority of hotels' visitors were travelling with their friends or colleagues (41.5%) followed by a partner or family (35.5%), and others (23%). Of all the respondents, 44.4% were searching for information from their family or friends. The majority of respondents (49.9%) stayed 2–3 days in a hotel. The respondents (35.8%) spending 100–200 USD a day in a hotel appeared to be the most popular expenditure group.

5. Factor analysis

Hotel Visitor's perceived value in Taiwan

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) with varimax rotation was employed to survey data to identify the dimensions of key constructs of the conceptual model. The assumptions of factor analysis were conducted by the Bartlett test of sphericity and the measure of sampling adequacy (MSA). Items with the factor loading of 0.4 or higher were considered as acceptable variables to measure constructs (Tinsley, Kass, 1979; Hair, Anderson, Tatham, Black, 1998). As indicated in Table 1, The KMO score of sampling adequacy was reported on 0.942 while the Bartlett test of sphericity had the value of 6392.952, df of 276 (p value = 0.00). Both examinations indicated that factor analysis was suitable for this study. This result showed that the data matrix was appropriate to have factor analysis performed on it. By doing so, this method provides an enhanced understanding of key subordinate dimensions toward the perceived value that may more accurately describe the interdependency of the 24 items used to measure the perceived value for visitors. Based on the scores of the factors loading, those factors derived are labeled as (1) value for service experience (eigenvalue = 11.833, explained variance = 18.902%), (2) functional value (eigenvalue = 1.933, explained variance = 15.526%), (3) cultural value (eigenvalue = 1.272, explained variance = 15.105%), (4) value for community (eigenvalue = 1.086, explained variance = 12.377%), and (5) value for money (eigenvalue = 1.002, explained variance = 9.653%). Those 5 factors with eigenvalues above 1 were extracted explaining 71.564% of the overall variance associated with visitors' perceived value.

Cronbach's alpha was employed to assess the reliability of the measurement scale of the study. Analysis findings indicated that the Cronbach's α values for various dimensions were between 0.799 to 0.911. Reliability analysis indicated that items in this scale are internally consistent. Because Nunnally (1978) and Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) determined that α values exceeding 0.7 are acceptable, all the dimensions proposed in this study reached appropriate reliability levels. In summary, the EFA analysis was employed to examine the important elements of customer value among hotel visitors. It is suggested that hotel visitors considered the aspects connecting experiential value, physical value, cultural value, value for community and value for money, which may lead to better understanding of visitors' site choice in the hotel sector, as shown in Table 1.

In this study, the structural equation modeling technique was applied to confirm the five-factor model was the best fit for the data. The assessment results of confirmatory factor analysis using AMOS 18.0 were provided in Table 2. As this was the first study to examine the factor structure of the perceived value among hotel visitors to Taiwan, confirmatory factor analysis with maximum likelihood, using AMOS18.0

was based on the recommendation of Cole (1987), the goodness of fit was evaluated using 4 criteria: chi-square goodness-of-fit; the goodness-of-fit (GFI), the adjusted goodness-of-fit (AGFI), and the root mean-square residual (RMS).

Table 1. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) of a visitor's value

Dimensions of a Visitor's Value	Factor Loading				
	Value for Service Experience	Functional Value	Cultural Value	Value for Community	Value for Money
Staff knowledgeable about duties	0.750				
Accurate service	0.716				
Prompt service	0.685				
Try to understand my wants	0.676				
Staff has good professional knowledge	0.659				
Providing constructive service	0.640				
Attractive leisure activities	0.574				
Good building maintenance		0.766			
High-quality furniture		0.745			
Clean and tidy environment		0.723			
High-quality restaurant environment		0.709			
High-quality food		0.650			
Outdoor activities			0.786		
Improving the quality of life			0.765		
Various dining			0.730		
Enhancing the psychical life			0.692		
Enhancing the educational quality of life			0.617		
Driving the development of tourism industry				0.823	
Enhancing local economy				0.820	
Recognition of local culture				0.799	
Practical facilities				0.515	
Feeling leisurely					0.832
Spend is worth					0.764
Satisfaction of cost					0.540
Eigen-value	11.883	1.933	1.272	1.086	1.002
% of the variance explained (Total = 71.564%)	18.902	15.526	15.105	12.377	9.653
Reliability Cronbach's α	0.889	0.906	0.911	0.865	0.799
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO)=0.942, Bartlett test=6392.952, DF=276, p=0.00					

Source: Author's data analysis, 2012.

The goodness of fit of the proposed model of confirmatory factor analysis is commonly noticed as evaluating a few fit indices (Kline, 1998). It has been advocated that the chi square (χ^2) value reflects the inconsistency between model-implied covariance and observed sample covariance. The value chi square (χ^2) statistic is preferably to be small and irrelevant. Additionally, the values of CFI and NFI are suggested to be ideal indices to recognize normed fit index (Bentler, 1990). Researchers have suggested that the value of RMSR is examined to assess the goodness of fit of a model by testing root mean square residual. All these indices ought to be larger than .90 for the model to be considered acceptable (Hair et al., 1998). Chi-square and fit indices were employed to examine the overall fit of the model. The results are shown in Table 2. The chi-square goodness of fit statistic for 787.317; the degrees of freedom was 242, $p = 0.00$. The significance of the chi-square indicated that the model reflect-

ed the pattern of covariance confined within the raw data. The CFA analysis of the overall pattern and GFI value of 0.847, AGFI value of 0.810 which is close to the criteria of 0.9 as recommended by Arbuckle and Wothke (1999) and SRMR value of 0.036 (<0.1) designate good fit. Additionally, fit indices NFI reaching 0.880 and CFI reaching 0.847 as well as χ^2/df reaching 3.253 as (1~5) also indicates good fit. The RMR was 0.036, which is slightly minor than the criteria of 0.05 as recommended by Browne and Cudeck (1993). The RMSEA was 0.078, which is slightly minor than the criteria of 0.08 as recommended by Browne and Cudeck (1993). The results of CFA established that the hypothesized model fits the data rationally fine and the overall fit indices are fairly applicable, as shown in Table 3.

Table 2. Overall (CFA) for the Modified Measurement Model

Construct and indicators	Standardized Loading	Construct and indicator (Coefficient alpha)	Variance extracted
Value for Service Experience (F1)		0.889	0.313
Staff knowledgeable about duties	0.699		
Accurate service	0.706		
Prompt service	0.796		
Try to understand my wants	0.784		
Staff has good professional knowledge	0.779		
Constructive service	0.785		
Attractive leisure activities	0.769		
Functional Value (F2)		0.906	0.596
Good building maintenance	0.768		
High-quality furniture	0.806		
Clean and tidy environment	0.833		
A high-quality restaurant environment	0.883		
High-quality food	0.787		
Cultural Value (F3)		0.911	0.508
Providing outdoor activities	0.819		
Improving the quality of life	0.798		
Various dining	0.806		
Enhancing the psychical life	0.847		
Enhancing the educational quality of life	0.833		
Value for Community (F4)		0.865	0.283
Drive the development of tourism industry	0.683		
Enhancing local economy	0.807		
Recognition of local culture	0.832		
Practical facilities	0.835		
Value for Money (F5)		0.799	0.377
Feeling leisurely	0.758		
Spend is worth	0.820		
Satisfaction of cost	0.698		

Source: Author's data analysis, 2012.

Table 3. The structural model fit of the data

	χ^2	χ^2/df	GFI	AGFI	NFI	RMR	RMSEA	p
value	787.32	3.253	0.847	0.81	0.88	0.036	0.078	0.00

Source: Author's data analysis, 2012.

In order to test whether significant differences in the perception of values in hotel selection as the independent variable exist across two groups, a t-tests with a two-tailed significance was undertaken to compare each factor mean. Table 4 pres-

ents the t-test analysis of the summarized visitors' perceptions of the value sense at individual factor levels. The results show that the two visitors' groups present some factors differently. Visitors who have joined a membership program are more likely to rank fewer score of perceived value associated with the hotel service experience than nonmembers ($t = -2.209$, $p < 0.05$). It is important to note that visitors who joined the membership program may have higher expectations on hotel service related performance. Table 4 findings are in line with the previous study by Liebermann (1999), which indicated that visitors with membership program had more interests to participate in various activities in clubs than nonmembers. It may be considered that these visitors may have high expectations regarding hotel service experience.

Table 4. Statistical differences in perceived values

Overall Rankings	Determinant Attributes of Perceived Value	Total Sample Mean	Members & Non-members	Mean	t-value	Sig. (2-tailed)
1	Value for Community	3.8963	Members	3.9286	0.174	0.862
			Non-Members	3.9066		
2	Value for Service Experience	3.741	Members	3.5796	-2.209	0.32*
			Non-Members	3.8033		
3	Value for Money	3.7236	Members	3.6762	-1.034	0.302
			Non-Members	3.7991		
4	Functional Value	3.71227	Members	3.6343	-0.869	0.389
			Non-Members	3.7259		
5	Cultural value	3.6916	Members	3.6857	-0.233	0.816
			Non-Members	3.7165		

Note: *Significant level at 0.05.

Source: Author's data analysis, 2012.

6. Conclusions and implications

The objective of this study is to explore the key aspects of a perceived value of hotel visitors. It was also aimed at developing an effective marketing program to satisfy customers and build customer higher leisure experience by identifying particular difference in value perception of two groups of hotel visitors (members and non-members).

This study extends the previous researches of Ancaranian and Kamann (2010), taking into account that membership satisfaction could shape customer commitment to organizations. In this paper, the study examined the relationships among membership program and visitors' perceived value attributes.

The current research has provided a clear explanation to value factors at market segment level in tourism and hospitality organizations. Understanding the perceived value is beneficial for managers and researchers as the key to developing useful strategies (Cronin, Brady, Hult, 2000; Eggert, Ulaga, 2002). The study found that components of visitor value including value for service experience, functional value, cultural value, value for community and value for money were significant in hotel selection. These results were comparable to the results of Li, Li, Kambele (2012). It has been found that improving the 5 aspects of a perceived value should enhance consumers' positive sentiments of the hotel image, as the types of fundamental factor to influence their future intentions of services consumption. Particularly, it would be useful for hotel managers to provide the values concerning service experience attitude and support for local community. More extensive tourism information on various outdoor

tourism activities and cultural attractions in a hotel should be provided by marketing campaigns. Different visitors groups were evident across the two segments (members and non-members). Notable difference in visitors' service experience of value perception was recognized by the data. Surprisingly, visitors who joined the hotel loyalty programs were most likely to be considered to have higher expectations on hotel service performance. Based on the results, it would be appropriate to state that hotel managers should provide superior service experience to these visitors who joined the hotel loyalty programs. Because the hotel segment is not homogeneous and relative importance of visitor value attributes in the establishment procedure might differ across nations, more empirical study addressing the visitor hotel selection is needed.

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